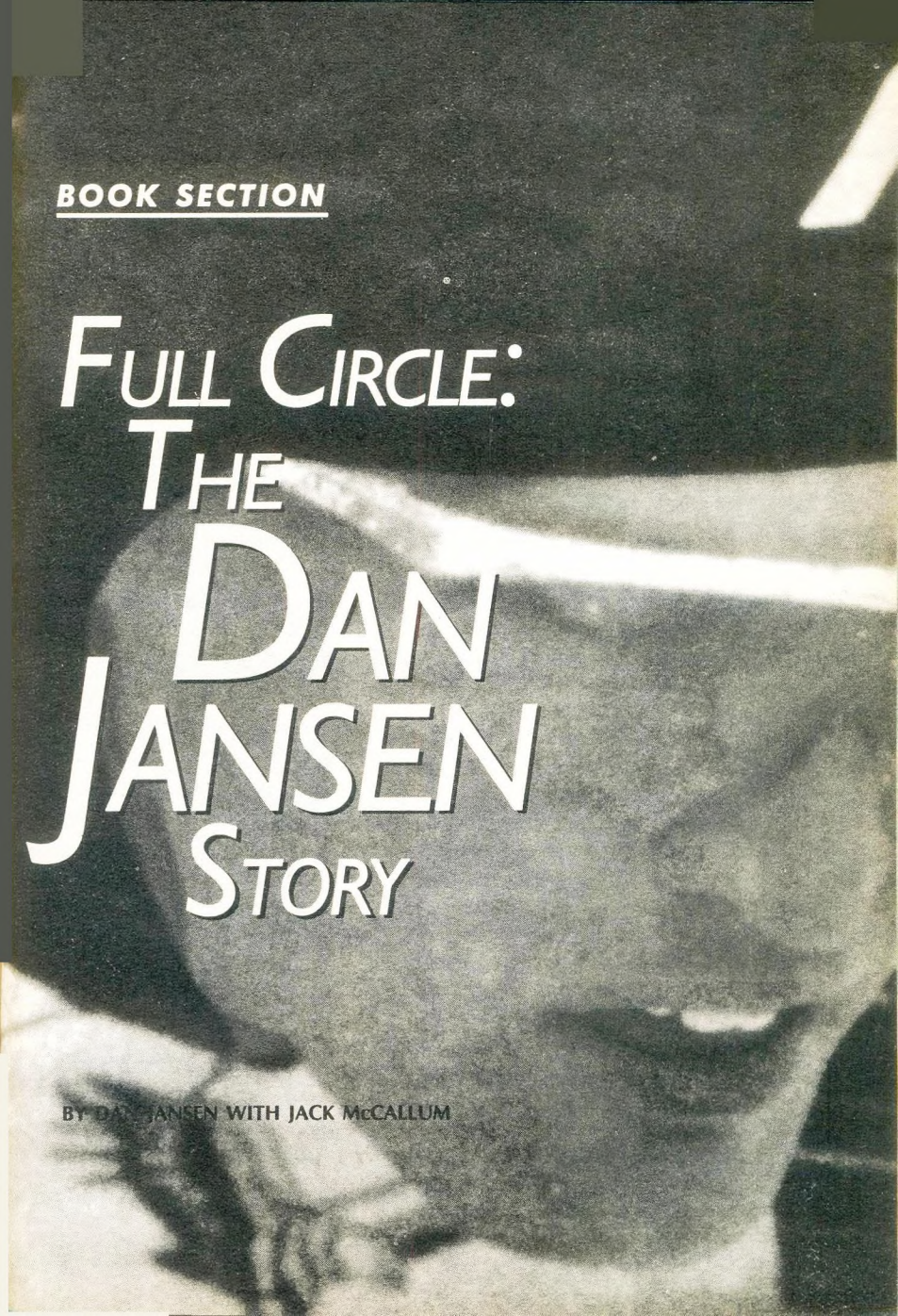
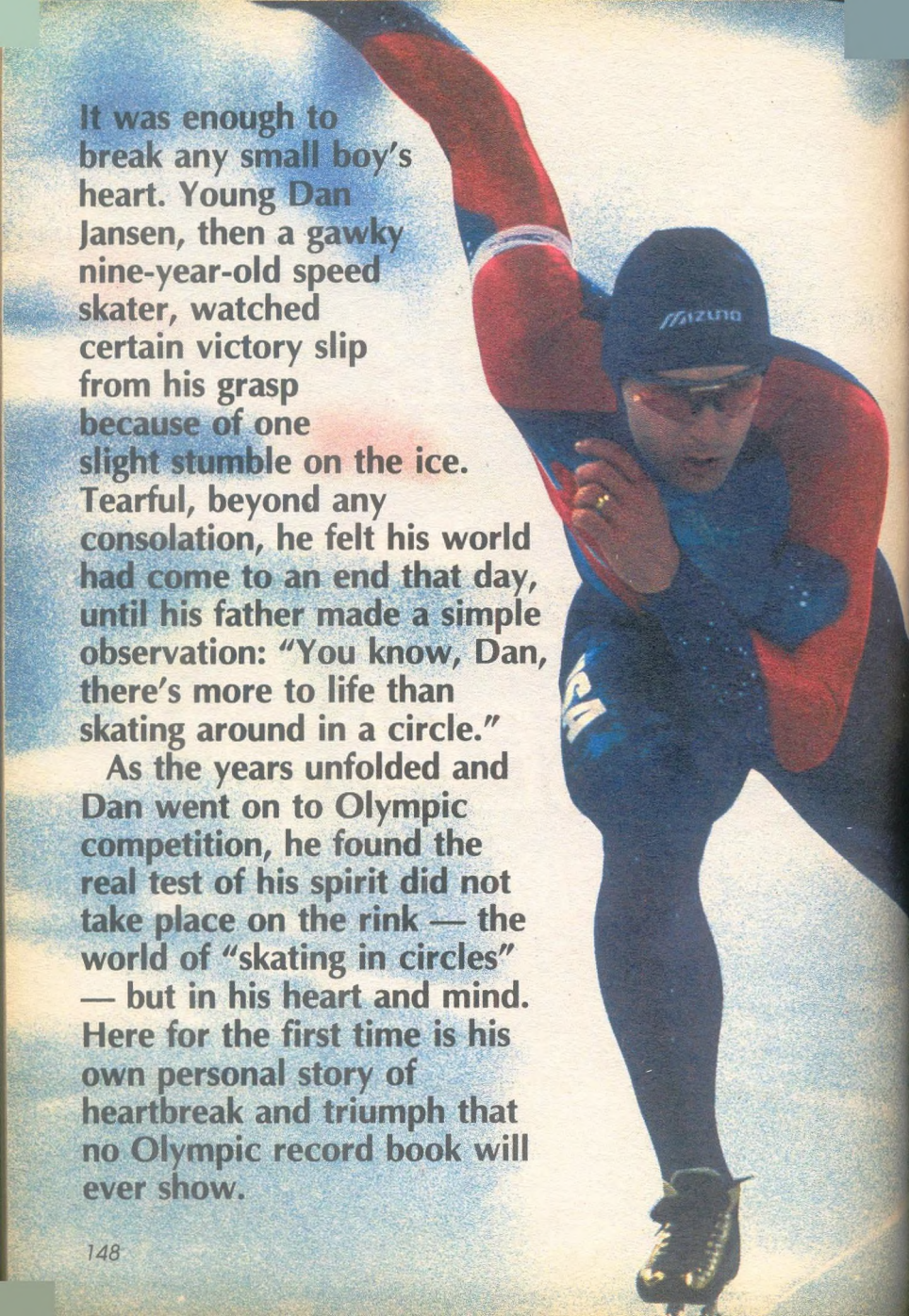


BOOK SECTION

FULL CIRCLE: THE DAN JANSEN STORY

BY DAN JANSEN WITH JACK McCALLUM



It was enough to break any small boy's heart. Young Dan Jansen, then a gawky nine-year-old speed skater, watched certain victory slip from his grasp because of one slight stumble on the ice. Tearful, beyond any consolation, he felt his world had come to an end that day, until his father made a simple observation: "You know, Dan, there's more to life than skating around in a circle."

As the years unfolded and Dan went on to Olympic competition, he found the real test of his spirit did not take place on the rink — the world of "skating in circles" — but in his heart and mind. Here for the first time is his own personal story of heartbreak and triumph that no Olympic record book will ever show.

WHEN I was growing up in Wisconsin, I loved being outside in winter, the wind in my face, the sun reflecting off the ice as I skated. The funny thing is, a friend of mine remembers walking to school with me and he says all I did was complain about the weather. Maybe he was right, but once I laced up my ice skates, the cold didn't matter.

I loved to skate, and Wisconsin's Eric Heiden, the five-time Olympic speed-skating champion, was my hero. So in a way it was not surprising that by the age of 18 I made the US Olympic team and skated in the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. By the next Olympics I had become such an accomplished speed skater I was considered Eric Heiden's heir in the special category of sprint races. In February 1988 I arrived in Calgary, Canada, the recent winner of the World Sprint championship and stronger and healthier than I had ever been.

I was healthy and my sister, Jane, was dying.

She was in the hospital, critically ill with leukaemia. Being the kind of person she was, Jane had spoken with me just a few days before, urging me to make the trip to Canada in spite of her illness, and to skate to win.

At 6am on the day of my race, I heard a knock on the door of my dormitory room. One of my Olympic teammates was standing there, telling me I had a phone call.

I felt a terrible sense of apprehension come over me. This could only be something bad. Shaking all over, I ran for the phone.

It was my mother calling from the hospital back home. She explained that Jane's blood pressure was dropping fast and that she probably wouldn't make it through the day. "We want you to say goodbye, Dan," my mother told me. "I'm going to put Jane on the line. She won't be able to respond, but she'll be able to understand you."

They held the phone to Jane's ear while I talked. I don't remember what I said, but I know I told her I loved her and that I was going to win my race for her.

When my mother came back on the line, I asked her if I should compete in the race that day. "You know Jane would want you to, Dan," she said.

A few hours later my oldest brother, Jim, who had come with me to Calgary, gave me the news. "Jane died, D.J.," he said. "She was just too weak to make it." Later he came to the dormitory where I was staying. We spent a couple of hours in the hallway remembering all the good things about our sister, and crying.

The rest of the day was a blur. I know when I finally got on the ice

for the 500-metre race, I felt wobbly, as if I hadn't been on skates in six months. I couldn't concentrate. Thoughts ran through my head. *Jane is dead. Should I be here? Jane is dead. What does everyone think about me skating? Jane is dead.* I kept imagining how hard this must be for my parents. They were watching me on TV while facing the absolutely worst thing in life — burying a child.

The only thing I remember about being at the starting line is that I wasn't focused on the race. My mother had been convinced that I should skate until she saw me at the line. "My God," she said. "What have we asked him to do?" All the colour had drained from my face.

When the starter said "Ready," I jumped ahead prematurely, which is rare for me. On the second start, I got off slow.

After the first 100 metres, my time was a terrible 9.9 seconds. It should have been 9.6. I couldn't power as I usually did, and I was slipping behind.

Coming into the first turn, I felt my left skate suddenly slip right out from under me. I knocked down Japanese skater Yasushi Kuriowa, then hit the rinkside pads hard. A photographer's camera crashed down beside me, and I bounced back onto my feet.

I took off my hood and held my head for a moment. Finally, I apologized to Yasushi, who got a restart and eventually finished eleventh.

After the race, I sat thinking, *If you could've held that turn, maybe* . . . Then I'd catch myself. *My God, you jerk, your sister just died.* I didn't know exactly what I should be feeling, but I knew I was feeling bad.

The support I received was overwhelming. Thousands of residents from West Allis, my hometown, signed a nearly 30-metre-long banner that said: "DAN, BE STRONG! KEEP THE FAITH! WISCONSIN IS WITH YOU ALL THE WAY!"

I got flowers from the toboggan team and cards from the hockey team. My parents even sent my closest brother, Mike, up to Calgary because they thought I needed him. They were right.

By February 18, the day of the 1000-metre, I was convinced that I could make something positive out of these Calgary Games. I was one of the best speed skaters in the world. I knew that I was in good shape and could still get out there and skate a world-class 1000. I decided to dedicate the race to Jane.

On the day of the race I felt optimistic. I had the outside lane and got off to a quick start. At 200 metres, I was leading the field. I continued leading at 400, and at 600.

Up in the stands, Mike turned to his wife. "Dan's got it made now," he told her. "He's made it through the toughest turns."

It was a split second later, at the

800-metre point, when it happened. I was heading down on a straightaway, leaning just a little too far on the outer edge of my skate, when I went down. Just like that, I was out of the race.

"Dan's got it made," my brother had said. But as my family and I were about to learn, when it came to the Olympics, it seemed like I never had it made.

"More to Life"

SO MUCH of what I was trying to achieve in Calgary began with my steadfast and loving family. Even though there were nine kids, we were and are a close-knit family. For example, every single one of us still lives in or near West Allis, the town where we were raised, which is extraordinary when you think about it.

To understand me and my story you have to know a little about my parents. Nothing confuses my parents more than when someone asks them: "So what's your secret?" They don't know how they raised nine children on a policeman's salary and a part-time nurse's pay. They don't know why the kids still stick together and love each other.

But all of us Jansen children know. It's because of their example. My parents worked hard. In addition to his job as a policeman, my father also held part-time jobs driving a truck or landscaping. They worked to create a comfortable home — and that extended not just to us kids, but to our friends as well.

My mother, Gerry, did not have many rules, but those she did had to do with treating people right. One of them, for instance, was that if one Jansen kid was invited somewhere, we all had to be invited. That meant if a neighbour wanted my sister Joanne and not Jane, then Joanne didn't go. Maybe that's one reason none of us has ever lost sight of the fact that family is the most important thing in our lives.

My father, Harry, believed strongly in the importance of discipline, but he never raised his voice. It wasn't fear that kept us in line, but respect. One time, I was playing with a friend by the railway tracks where we shouldn't have been. I fell and ripped my clothes.

"You're going to get it," my friend said. He was simply amazed when all my father did was look at me and say, "Oh boy." That's when you knew you were in trouble with my father: "Oh boy."

There's no doubt we all got our athletic ability from Dad, who was a natural at everything he tried. He was one of those gifted athletes who could also teach.

I probably never would've started skating if Mary, the oldest Jansen, hadn't been prone to getting sick during the winter months. She was a terrific athlete, but once winter arrived, she seemed always

to be lying around the house, coughing a lot.

My father was convinced that the reason she was sick was because she stayed inside too much. So one Sunday morning, he took her to the nearby North American Skating Championships. Mary watched the competition for a while, then said to my dad, "I can do that."

She was ten years old and had never before had a pair of skates on her feet. But it turned out she was right. She had such a knack for skating that she became a state champion.

My older sister Janet used to watch Mary from the rink-side. Gradually, she took up skating, then Diane did too. After my older sisters set the pace, my brothers just naturally followed. Jim was an above-average skater, but Dick won several state championships and finished third in the US nationals as a junior. He also became the first coach for me and Mike.

I was only four years old when I skated in my first meets. Mike and I preferred throwing snowballs and rolling down the hills to actually competing, though. The meet organizers used to bribe us with coins and chocolate bars just to get us to the starting line.

There was rarely a time when there weren't at least three Jansen kids competing, and my parents' entire weekends were devoted to our meets. I don't know how they did it. After working the 4pm-to-midnight shift at the police department, my father came home on Friday night and began sharpening as many as five pairs of skates. It took him almost two hours.

Meanwhile, my mother made sandwiches. Then they'd go to bed around 2:30am, wake up at 5:30 and drive us to our meets. If the meet was on Sunday, you could add a stop at church. No matter how busy they were, they always had enough time to take us around.

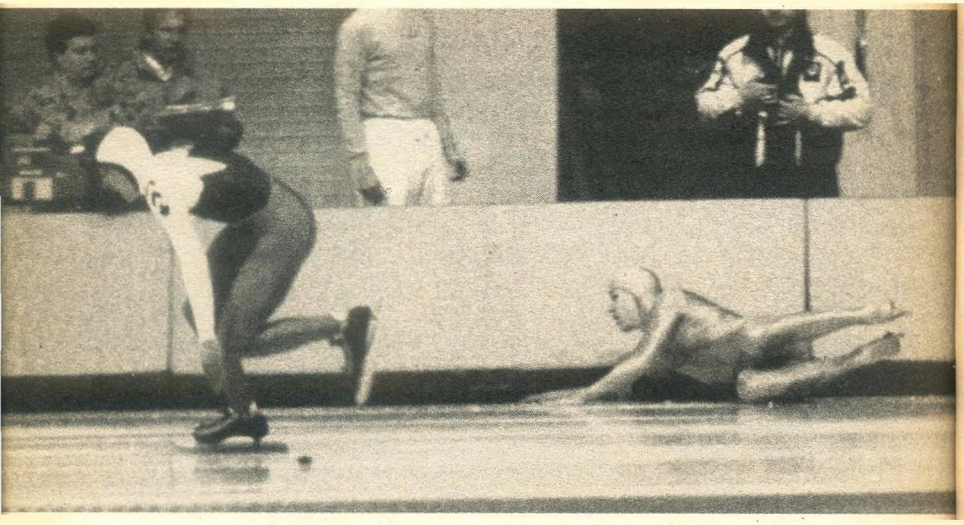
Our parents never pushed us into skating, however. Joanne tried it, but wasn't successful at all. When she asked Dad if she could quit, he was genuinely perplexed by the question. "Why would you do something you don't like?" he replied.

One memory sticks out from those early days. When I was nine years old, Mike and I were competing at the US national championships in Minnesota. Mike won his division, his first national title, and I was in good position to win mine.

But coming around a turn in one of the races, I tripped on a rubber hose they had set up as a lane marker. That slip cost me the national title by one point.

I started crying. I was crying as Mum took off my skates and throughout the award ceremonies. I kept crying when we got in the car, and when we pulled into our driveway six hours later.

My father hadn't spoken a word



The fateful second fall in the 1988 Olympics. "I never had it made"

to me all the way home. But as we got out of the car, he said quietly, "You know, Dan, there's more to life than skating around in a circle."

It wasn't until much later that I came to truly know the wisdom of those words.

Olympic Dream

OF ALL the Jansen skaters, I was good, but I was not the best. For years that honour belonged to Mike, who is 18 months older. He and my brother Dick were terrific skaters. Then when I turned 14, I started to grow, and all of a sudden I was the one winning most of the time.

That got me motivated and made me surer of what I wanted to do. I found that I loved, and still love, skating. Somebody once said about being a writer that you don't choose writing — it chooses you. I guess it's the same with skating.

The more races I won, the more certain I was that skating was what I wanted. I was playing high school football, but I decided to quit the team and put all my energy into skating. So I told my father, "Dad, I want to quit football and concentrate on skating."

I'm pretty sure that my father regretted my giving up a game he loved so much. But he said okay. He truly wanted what I wanted.

The decision would drastically change my life. During much of the school year, my classes were arranged so I could leave at two o'clock to work out at the local park. After two hours of practice,

I'd come home, do schoolwork and eat dinner. Then I'd go back to the rink for another session.

I made my first junior world team in 1983, and for six weeks in November and December I left high school to train in Europe. In my first overseas competition, I set a junior world record in the 500-metre race.

By my last year in high school, when most of my friends were getting ready for college, my thoughts were on the '84 Olympics. At the age of 18 I had qualified for both the 500- and 1000-metre races in the Olympics in Sarajevo.

For a teen-ager, being at the Olympics was almost too much to take in. I was the youngest skater and one of the youngest athletes at the Games. Everything was a thrill.

The Games were everything I thought they would be. My parents were able to be there. I felt proud that after all their weekend drives to meets in small towns, I could finally reward them with a trip to a place like Sarajevo. At the time I was there it was a romantic, almost magical place, and when I think what's happened to that city since then I feel a tremendous sadness.

At my first Olympic race, the 500-metre, I was much less nervous than I had been at the Olympic trials. Back then, just making the US team was my main thing, and being in the race made it perfect. Partly because of that relaxed attitude I skated an excellent time, and for a moment I was in third place.

Ultimately Gaétan Boucher of Canada beat my time and took the bronze medal, but I wasn't crushed. Here I was the fourth-best speed skater in the world and I was 18 years old. It was a moment that changed my life. From then on I knew this was my future.

Looking back, the '84 Games in Sarajevo were my only "pure" Olympics. I went there with low expectations and high principles. If I won a medal, fine. If I didn't, that was fine too. I only wanted to compete as well as I could.

But I have to admit when I got home from Sarajevo it finally sank in that I had missed a bronze medal by only sixteen-hundredths of a second. I realized for the first time the lure and power of the Olympic medal. The Olympics would never be that simple again.

Jane

I DON'T remember that my decision to go into skating full time was a particularly big moment in the life of the Jansen family. Everyone was proud of my performance in Sarajevo, of course, but they were proud of all of the Jansens' accomplishments.

At home I was just one of the kids, and the youngest kid at that. In a family as large as ours there were inevitably the older kids and the younger kids. My sister Jane, Mike and I were always the ones

without all the responsibility.

Of the three of us younger ones, Jane was definitely the most sensitive. Knowing this and being boys, Mike and I took every opportunity to see if we could make her cry. Once Jane fell asleep on the couch, so we carefully put chocolate chips all over her to see if they would melt. They did. As we hoped, when Jane woke up she cried.

Jane, Mike and me (left to right). "A special bond"

But Jane was tough in her own way. When she was 14, she developed scoliosis and had to wear a brace 23 hours a day. The brace was so agonizingly uncomfortable that she tossed and turned all night. Nonetheless she followed the doctor's orders meticulously and took that thing off only in the shower. Through it all I never heard her complain.

She was also infinitely forgiving. No matter how much Mike and I teased her, when she was older she was always willing to drive us wherever we wanted to go. She was one of those people who are so nice that you wonder if they are for real.

I know for a fact she was. In spite of all the times I tormented her there was a special bond between us. I could always talk with her in a way that was rare even for a brother and sister.

Jane really wanted only two things out of life — to be a nurse and a mother. Before she died, she managed to do both. She finished nursing school and after she married had two girls, Susie and Amy.

On January 29, 1987, Jane gave birth to her third daughter, Jessica. Everything seemed normal at first. But a routine blood test revealed something disturbing. The doctors asked Jane to come back to the hospital.

When I came home from a workout on the morning of February 4, Dad and my brother Jim were in the living room. Right away, I knew something was wrong. Dad's eyes were red.

"They've diagnosed Jane with leukaemia," Jim said.

I knew the disease was serious,

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but my mind wouldn't accept the news. My first reaction was, "Well, what do we do to fix that?"

Jim just shook his head. "You can't. You usually die from this kind of leukaemia."

I reached out to my father and hugged him, my mind reeling. Up to this point in my life I hadn't known real tragedy. Sadness was a bad workout. Disappointment was finishing out of the medal count in a World Cup race. It was very hard for me to take this all in. *Why? Why Jane? Why us?* I kept thinking.

The whole family planned to meet later at Jane's to discuss what to do. *Maybe it's all a bad dream,* I thought as I drove to Jane's house. Maybe the tests were wrong. But when I saw all my brothers, sisters and in-laws gathered there, I knew it was true. I went over to Jane, and just held her.

One of the first possible avenues to pursue with a leukaemia patient is to find a match for a bone-marrow transplant. As luck would have it, both Joanne and I were perfect. Both of us were more than willing to be the donor. The doctors selected Joanne, because I had been ill with glandular fever.

The transplant was going to be done at a cancer hospital. Even though she was supposed to stay only a few weeks, Jane ended up spending much more time there. All kinds of medical problems arose, and the specialists had to wait much longer than expected to do the transplant. At one point her doctors told her she could go back home and return later for the operation.

"No, I'll stay," Jane decided. "I told my little girls that Mummy will be back when she's healthy. If I come back now, they'll think I'm okay." So she stayed.

Jane never wavered from the belief that she would beat the disease. Her courage was unbelievable, and she even kept her sense of humour. One time, when a doctor who had invented a particular cancer treatment was administering it to her, Jane looked at him with a deadpan expression and said, "Say, have you done this before?"

Finally, in early October, she came home and although I had been away for much of the time competing and training for the '88 Olympics in Calgary, I managed to get to see her before I had to leave again for autumn training in Europe. I remember she was bald from the radiation treatments; bald but still looking beautiful. We stood in her garden talking, laughing and crying.

At first the bone-marrow transplant seemed to work. Jane had some healthy weeks in the autumn. In December, I was home competing in Olympic trials. Just as I finished my first 500-metre race, I looked up to see my Dad standing there. I knew from his face that the news was bad.

"Jane's out of remission," he

said. "She had to go back into the hospital." Except for a brief visit home, Jane never left the hospital again.

Mum and Dad felt terrible because they had been watching me in the Olympic trials instead of being with Jane. I felt terrible because I was concentrating on something so frivolous as skating while my sister was dying. And Jane felt terrible because she was causing everybody so much trouble.

Luckily, the World Sprint Championships were being held in West Allis that February. But there was no chance that Jane could make it to the rink.

Then suddenly I remembered something that gave me a big boost. Years earlier, a few of us Jansens were together, and the subject of the world championships came up. Jane had said, "When Dan wins the world's..." Not "if." When.

One week before the Calgary Olympics, her prediction came true. I won my first world title. That was the first time an American had won the world sprint title since Eric Heiden got it back in 1980.

Not if, Jane had said. When.

Right after the race I went to the hospital with my medal and held it up to her. She couldn't have been happier if she had won it herself. That was the last time I saw her alive.

"Continue the Race"

SOMEHOW, I had skated well enough to earn a spot on both the 500 and 1000 Olympic teams, but as the departure date approached, my mind was not on competing. I was torn — half of me said I should go to Calgary and finish what I'd started, and half of me said that I should stay home with Jane.

Although Jane was out of remission, she appeared to be in no immediate danger. In my last conversation with her she said, typically, "I'll be fine. Don't worry about me. Concentrate on your skating."

A week or so after I was gone, her condition began to worsen. My family held a big meeting to decide who would go to Calgary to watch me compete, and who would stay home. Jane, of course, told everybody to go, including my mother.

My mum desperately wanted to be with her daughter, but Jane kept insisting she go. Finally, Diane met Jane and said to her, "Look, you know you want Mum here. Please tell her." So at last Jane admitted to my mother she wanted her to stay. Both of them were relieved.

Eventually Mary, Janet, Jim and my dad came to the Games. Then on February 13, the day before my 500-metre race, Jane's lungs started to fill with fluid. The situation was turning grave.

My father came to me after my training session. "I'm needed at home," he said. That night, I wrote in my journal, "This is it, D.J. Do it for Jane."

The next morning, the family was called back to the hospital. Jane didn't have much time left, and everyone went to say a final good-bye. There was only a brief discussion about whether or not to tell me. They knew I had to have my moment with my sister as well.

One of the questions people often ask me is, "Why did they tell you about your sister? Why didn't they just let you skate first?"

That approach would have made no sense to me at all. I was bound to hear the news one way or another, and I certainly preferred to hear it from my loved ones. If I hadn't been told in time, I wouldn't have had the chance to say my good-bye to Jane. To me, that was more important than anything.

At the funeral back in Wisconsin, Father John Yockey, a Jansen in-law, touched on the same subject: "Dan, you loved Jane as profoundly as she loved you. She told you to go for it and you did, and we are so proud of you, just as Jane is. You have taught us one of the most important lessons in life.

"You see, we all fall. But we thank you for showing us how to get up again with dignity and to see it through to the finish line. We, too, will continue the race until we finish."

I was doing pretty well until Father Yockey said those words, and then I broke down. But funerals are not for holding in emotions. They're for remembering your loved ones in a personal way. Soon after, they played "On Eagles' Wings," Jane's favourite hymn. No Jansen has since heard that hymn without shedding a tear.

My memories of that day are, of course, sad. But in the following weeks, I received more than 7000 letters from all over the world.

The most moving one came from Mark Arrowood, a 30-year-old man who had won a gold medal in the Special Olympics Games, the competition for the mentally retarded. Here's what he wrote:

"Dear Dan, I watched you on TV. I'm sorry that you fell two times. I am in Special Olympics. I won a gold medal at the Pennsylvania State Summer Olympics right after my Dad died seven years ago. Before we start the Games we have a saying that goes like this: Let me win. But if I cannot win let me be brave in the attempt.

"I want to share one of my gold medals with you because I don't like to see you not get one. Try again in four more years."

Enclosed with Mark's letter was the medal he had won.

A New Life

JANE'S death and my falls made me wonder if my life was really going in the right direction.

For one thing, the '92 Olympics in Albertville, France, were four years away, and I didn't know if I could stay on top of my form that long. For another, many of the

kids I had gone to school with were now starting careers. What was I doing with my life?

I was planning to take some time away from skating and attend classes at the University of Calgary. Before I started, though, the most wonderful thing happened. I met a young woman named Robin Wicker.

I had been given the Olympic Spirit Award, and for that reason was asked to appear at the opening of the new Charlotte Coliseum in North Carolina. Later, as part of the function, one of the organizers took me out to a restaurant. It was there that I was introduced to Robin.

I tell people I fell hard that night. And I wasn't even on ice.

When Robin and I started talking, a whole new world opened up for me. Still struggling with my sister's death and my falls at the Olympics, I felt a little wary with people I didn't know. Yet I immediately found I could be very open with Robin, and she seemed intuitively to understand the right things to say.

I called her the next morning and asked if she'd like to go out with me that night. Before long we were seeing more and more of each other. When we weren't together we were talking on the telephone; one month my phone bill was $800.

There were many obstacles, but I wanted to be with Robin and that was that. I decided to propose to her on July 4, 1988.

Robin was visiting my family at our cottage. That night, we went out to dinner at a lakeside restaurant. After we ordered our meal, I demonstrated my knack for clear speech and lucid communication by saying to her, "You know how we always talk about the future, and getting married someday and all that?"

Robin replied, "Yes."

"Well, you know," I continued nervously, "I'd like to do it pretty soon. So," I finally asked, "will you marry me?"

"Yes, sure. I guess so."

I could tell from her reaction she thought I was just making vague talk about the future.

"No, you don't understand," I said. "This is a proposal. I mean — I want to get married now."

I really took her by surprise. She got up from the table and disappeared for about 20 minutes. I was extremely confused until I figured out that she had been busily calling her family back home and telling them the great news. I took that as a yes. Nine months later, we got married.

Getting married was one of the best things that ever happened to me. Robin brought a healthy, outside perspective to my life at just the right time. Although she knew I was committed to my sport, Robin didn't really know what that meant until she saw it firsthand.

Training exercises, such as leaping up a flight of stairs on one leg, struck her as a little bit strange. And it took a while for her to get used to seeing her husband come home from a gruelling day of training and literally fall on the floor from exhaustion.

But all the hard work was paying off. My skating continued to improve. Not only did I make the Olympic team, but just three weeks before the '92 Olympics I set a new world record in the 500-metre. By the time I got to Albertville, I was predicted to be one of the medal winners.

For encouragement, just before my 500-metre event Robin gave me a sweatshirt that said: "*Carpe Diem,* D.J." Seize the day. Instead, the day seized me. I finished fourth. But as far as I was concerned, it might as well have been 44th.

My performance devastated me. I went into semi-seclusion, thereby dooming myself psychologically for the 1000-metre three days later. I got too tired in the last part of that race and finished in 26th place.

What had happened? It's hard to know. I had decided to cut back on my training, and perhaps I was too stale coming into the Games. There had also been complaints that the portable track was unevenly refrigerated. Rain that morning made an already bad situation much worse. The ice was soft and pebbly, and under those conditions skate blades don't turn easily. That's bad for everybody, but worse for a long, "glide" skater like me.

I knew what my critics were saying after Albertville: Dan Jansen could not deliver. The two falls in Calgary could be explained by the death of his sister, but there was no explanation for Albertville. Knowing people felt that way about me hurt a lot. But I was not going to give up. Fortunately I would not have to wait long. The next Winter Olympics, in Lillehammer, Norway, were only two years away. I got back to work.

It was around that time that the best gift in the world came along. We found out that Robin was pregnant. We started talking about names, and one day I mentioned "Jane" to Robin. She got excited about it too. We had other names in mind if it was a boy. But if it was a girl, I knew that I wanted to honour the memory of my sister.

On May 27, 1993, Robin gave birth to a baby girl. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

Breakthrough

I DESPERATELY wanted to put the whole experience of the Calgary Games behind me, but that didn't seem to be possible. In practically every interview I did, reporters continued to bring up the death of my sister and my two falls.

"Dan, is there any way you can forget what happened in 1988?" they'd ask me.

"Well, yes," I'd say, "but only if

everyone stops asking me about it."

They'd all laugh, and the next reporter would ask, "Seriously, Dan, do you still think about falling? Do you still think about Jane?"

I tried to treat the subject of my falling lightly, but in fact it was taking a heavy toll on me. My manager suggested that I visit a sports psychologist in Florida named Dr Jim Loehr (pronounced lair). I resisted the idea at first, but in the end I relented. My manager was right. I knew I needed help.

The most accurate description of my performance at Albertville came from Peter Mueller, who was then the West German coach. "That wasn't Dan Jansen skating," Peter said. "That was his body. That man was still in shock." As usual, Peter was right.

As I talked to Dr Loehr about the '88 Olympics, I began to sort out my confused feelings for the first time. On the day Jane died, we realized, two worlds had collided: the world of what should have been the greatest moment of my career, and the world of what turned out to be the worst day of my life.

Something inside me simply would not let me experience happiness when my sister hadn't been buried yet. So I denied myself triumph, and showed everyone that Jane's death was far more important than any Olympic medal. That was, of course, the absolute truth. And I proved it by falling down. Twice.

It took me six months to work through these negative thoughts with Dr Loehr. Being finally able to deal with Jane's death and the '88 Olympics was a huge breakthrough.

From that point on, Dr Loehr also made me pay more attention to the mental part of sports. I had always kept a journal of my workouts, but it was downright simplistic compared to Dr Loehr's record-keeping. I kept track of my physical activities, but also of how I felt from day to day. I wrote it all down and faxed the charts to him from wherever I was.

Our goal was to strive for balance between my sport and my life. The journal pages I filled out were a way of keeping track of how much I was training and how it was affecting me, so I would know how much time I needed to recover. I think it was no coincidence that there were huge improvements in my performance after I followed Dr Loehr's programme.

While Dr Loehr took care of the mind, Peter Mueller, who had since become my coach, took care of the body. An Olympic gold medal winner himself, Pete was someone I had known since I was a kid. We'd often crossed paths at skating competitions; in fact, it was Pete who first saw my potential when I was only 12 years old.

Pete Mueller's training philosophy is simple: you can't get too

strong, and you can never have too much endurance. His continuous workout was one of the toughest I've ever known.

First, Pete would have me do 30 minutes of hard skating. Then he'd make me run up and down a steep hill until I was practically delirious with fatigue. After that, he'd have me do a nice little 45-minute endurance run.

Keep in mind that the 1000-metre race usually lasts about one minute, 15 seconds, and a 500 lasts about half that long.

I realize now that even though my specialty was the shorter 500-metre race, a lot of the endurance workouts were part of his plan to improve my performance in the longer, more tiring 1000-metre race. He was doing on the ice exactly what Dr Loehr was doing in his office.

As a result, by the time the '94 Olympics approached I had greater confidence than ever before. It was based on more than a good feeling. On December 4, 1993, I became the first person ever to skate the 500-metres in less than 36 seconds. In the world championships a few weeks later, I skated even faster on the same ice in Calgary where I had fallen in the 1988 Olympics.

If I was going to make these Olympics different from the others, the thought that I had to keep foremost in my mind was that I was the best 500-metre skater in the world. I had proved it all year. And now I had to prove it one more time.

Going into Lillehammer, I had loads of confidence, and I think everyone around me did too. My father didn't tell me this before the race, but he thought I would win partly because he felt there was simply nothing bad left that could happen to me.

Peter was less restrained. "I know Dan is going to win," he declared confidently at a Lillehammer press conference. "The way he's skating, he can skate at 90 percent of his ability and win. If he skates at 100 percent, he can win big. He's the greatest sprinter in the history of speed skating, and he's going to prove it."

Believe it or not, I felt that confident too.

Sad Saga Continues

MY PREPARATION began the night before the race. I slept soundly, which was a good sign. I arrived at the rink about 11am, three hours before the race, and did all my usual things to get loose — a little jogging, a little jumping around, lots of stretching. I got on the ice about 90 minutes before the race to do a few slow laps, some accelerations, a few starts.

As I glided around the Viking Ship Olympic Hall, I briefly glanced into the stands and thought about my family there — Robin and Jane, Mum and Dad,

and my three oldest siblings, Mary, Janet and Jim. I didn't want to look directly at them. I knew Robin was a nervous wreck. I had too much to think about. Jane had the best attitude for the race. She was sound asleep.

The warm-ups felt good. This was also a positive sign. When I came back off the ice all that remained was to sit there for a long time alone, trying to relax.

Lots of things ran through my mind: my sister Jane, Calgary in '88, Albertville in '92, all the fans in Wisconsin who were pulling for me, my family. I never let one linger too long. The main thought I wanted to keep foremost in my mind was that I was the best 500-metre skater in the world. It was that simple.

I had a few concerns. The day before, the men's 5000-metre event had been held. The ice had been made harder for the long-distance event, and it seemed to me it was brittle and breaking away more easily. But by race time the next day, I had put my worries about the ice out of my mind.

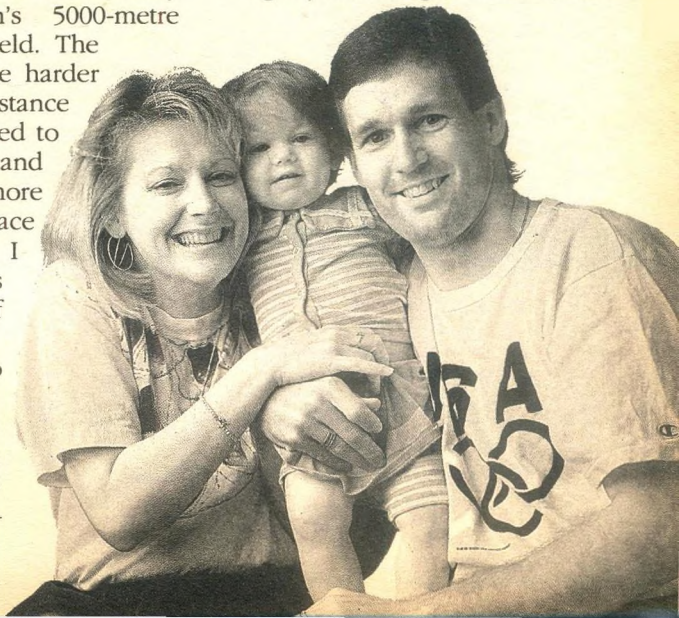
The first pair to race was Chinese skater Liu Hongbo and Sylvain Bouchard, a Canadian. I didn't consider them my chief competitors, but when Liu recorded a 36.54-second sprint, a surprisingly good time for him, I knew the ice was fast.

That only reaffirmed my decision to skate all-out. My feeling was to try for another world record. If I did, I would win the gold because no one else was capable of beating it. The last thing I wanted to happen was to skate a safe speed and lose. This no-holds-barred philosophy was a little risky because of the brittleness of the ice, but I was sure it was the best.

Finally, it was my time up. Go to the start, the official announced. I took the line beside Sean Ireland of Canada. I was totally focused on the race.

Ready. This was the moment I'd end my misery. It was medal time.

I got just the right toehold, and



then Ireland false-started. It was frustrating, but I had to quickly refocus. At the restart, I didn't feel quite as comfortable as before, but I was still ready. And then we were off.

I shot down the ice and covered the first 100 metres in 9.82 seconds. That was slower than my world-record time of 9.75 seconds for that interval, but I knew it was still good enough to win.

I could feel that I wasn't gripping the ice very well, however. For a second I thought maybe I should hold back a bit and skate more cautiously. But I've learned once you decide on a basic strategy, it's foolish to back off it.

The next 100 metres flew by, and before I knew it the last 300-metre stretch was coming up. I was still skating smoothly. This was usually my best stretch of the race, so I knew I had an excellent chance for the gold.

Then, as I went into the last turn, my left skate slipped. Briefly I was off balance and my hand touched the ice. I should've still been all right because I had some speed going, but my next two strokes were weak. I didn't feel that my skates were gripping the ice properly. You need to "feel" a turn if you're going to put all your strength into it. That feeling wasn't there. That killed it.

Any little failure in form or momentary slip in precision can throw you off, a deadly error in a sport where a half-second is an eternity. My time was 36.68 seconds, which was fast, considering what had happened. But it wasn't fast enough. The winning time, by Russian skater Aleksandr Golubev, was 36.33.

When I crossed the finish line with that subpar time, it started a chain reaction of emotions all around me. The first thing I did was laugh to myself. After almost falling, I was just over three-tenths of a second away from winning the gold medal. It was too absurd.

Peter Mueller was crushed. Up in the stands, Robin immediately got up and left. She had got so sick of seeing footage of herself crying during my two races at the Albertville Games that she had to get away from the cameras. And when she did, of course, she started crying.

Back home, it was just as hard on my family. My brother Mike said he woke up that morning convinced this would be the day. Then he heard the phone ring and his little daughter say, "Daddy, Daddy, Uncle Dan slipped." He was furious with her because he thought she was just fooling around. Then he went to the breakfast table, saw tears in the eyes of his wife, Angie, and he knew it was true.

He told me later that he kept saying over and over, "This can't be happening again. This can't be happening again."

I stood there as Pete skated up

to me. I looked him square in the eye and said, "I quit. I just plain quit." I didn't mean it literally, of course. Well, maybe for a second I did. But I was disgusted.

There was no shortage of second-guessing over what had happened. But one fact stared me in the face. Once again, I had failed to get a medal. The sad saga of Dan Jansen in the Olympics continued.

I felt the crushing realization that I would never win a medal in the 500-metre. Maybe I was the best speed skater ever, but I felt my chance at an Olympic medal was gone. Forever.

Last Chance

UNBEKNOWN to me, Dr Loehr had come to Norway to watch me skate. It was the first time he'd ever seen me compete live. He was so confident I would win the 500 he booked his flight home the following day, feeling that I wouldn't need his counsel for the 1000.

As soon as he saw me slip in the 500-metre, he set a new Olympic record for dodging security men and working his way down to visit me. I was in shock when I saw him.

But I was also relieved. He couldn't have come at a better time. I was just about to do a major press conference. He strongly advised against it. "You have got to start preparing for the 1000," he told me. "Put the 500 behind you immediately. Stop reliving it."

I knew he was absolutely correct. At Albertville I hadn't used my time between races to prepare for the 1000, and I didn't want to do the same thing again. I sent my apologies, and the Olympic officials understood.

The cruel irony that the 1000-metre — my weaker event — was my last chance at an Olympic medal did not escape any of us. For years I just didn't believe I could win a 1000. The reasons were both psychological and physiological. I could've convinced myself that I was the world's best in both the 500 and 1000. But I thought that it was simply too difficult for one person to dominate both races.

I had also come to believe that my style was only appropriate for the shorter race. I had the speed to get off the starting line quickly, but I always seemed to lose steam in the last 200 metres of the 1000. As a result I couldn't shake the feeling: I'm probably the best ever, but I am not going to win an Olympic medal in the 1000-metre.

When I first went to Dr Loehr, Pete urged me to try improving my performance in the 1000. "You're going to think this is crazy..." Dr Loehr began. He told me what he wanted me to do.

Dr Loehr believed that the more a person confronted his personal demons as part of his daily life, the better his chance of defeating them. To overcome my resistance

to the 1000-metre, he suggested that I write "I love the 1000" as often as possible.

I felt silly at first. Hey, I love the 1000. Right. It doesn't happen overnight. But when I finally won a 1000-metre race, I thought about that note I wrote on the hotel stationery. Maybe I really do love the 1000. Then I won another race. And another. Then I won again. Hey, there's something to this.

So there I was in Lillehammer writing, "I love the 1000" like some six-year-old kid. Every day, I put it on my training charts, right at the top of the page. I put a note in my little drawer in the bathroom, the one with my razor. There was another on the refrigerator and still another on the bedroom mirror.

"I love the 1000" became my personal mantra.

Dr Loehr also taught me not to dwell on defeat too long. "You can go down, D.J.," he'd say. "But make sure you come back up." To help myself back I decided to stay the night at the house that my family had rented. I hadn't spent a lot of time there because I needed peace and quiet before the 500. But now I needed more the love and support I could get only from my family.

It was a quiet evening. I hugged Robin and Janie, played cribbage with my father and Jim, and talked to Dr Loehr from time to time. Outwardly, everything appeared back to normal. Inwardly, I still felt horrible.

That night I dozed off quickly because I was so tired. But about 3am I woke up and just couldn't get back to sleep. I woke Robin up and we talked. We both dozed off again, but I was up at 7am.

Jane was sleeping in the crib next to us and, as a small stroke of fate, she happened to be waking up just as I looked in at her. I peered over the crib and she gave me the most wonderful smile I've ever seen. It was just what I needed.

Well, I thought, the world will go on after all.

Fortune's Doorstep

THE MORNING before the 1000-metre race I sat on the bench for the longest time. "I don't feel like skating today," I told Peter.

And he said, "I know, D.J. Just wait. It'll pass."

I wasn't in the dumps just because of my slip in the 500 three days earlier. It was more a collective feeling of failure, remembering all the devastating experiences of 1988 in Calgary and 1992 in Albertville. I had truly believed before the Lillehammer Games that the 500-metre race was going to end my misery.

But as the day wore on and I started to work out, I felt my negative feelings recede. One powerful thought kept me going. I was truly blessed to be getting a final opportunity.

I also reminded myself that be-

ing at the Olympics wasn't luck. The major reason I was getting this chance was because I had persevered, trained hard and remained at the top of my sport.

After a good training session I spent the rest of the day at the house my family had rented. I did the usual things — played cribbage, munched on pizza — and pretended I was completely calm and cool and collected.

About seven o'clock in the evening, when it was time for me to return to the Village, I gathered the family together, and spoke from the heart.

"Tomorrow is my last shot, my last Olympic race. All the pressure, all the burdens of the past, forget about them. I want you to know that skating has been my life for the last decade, and 98 percent of my memories are positive. That's what I want this to be."

That speech was how I honestly felt. Skating had been both my master and friend since I was a kid. It had taken me to wonderful places that I never would have seen otherwise. I had met my best friends in the world and my wife because of skating. I simply wanted this last race to be a celebration of all those happy occasions.

That same night Pete pointed out to me something I had long forgotten. In the 1976 Winter Olympics, he, too, had skated a poor race in the 500. Then he came back and won his gold medal in the 1000. Wouldn't it be fitting, we both thought, if I could do the same thing?

Dr Loehr offered his own thoughts on the situation. "Just think what a triumph this would be if you could win the 1000," he told me. "There's no reason you can't fight one more time. Winning the 500, your specialty, shouldn't be the best ending to your story, Dan. This should be the best ending."

"That Was for You"

THE NEXT day, with just 90 minutes until the race, I didn't feel completely ready. This would've been as good a time as any to panic, but I didn't.

I knew I needed to feel more tired. To a non-athlete this might not make sense, but I know when I competed in World Cup meets I would skate two races in a row. Though I'd be a little fatigued, I also felt completely loose. And I needed to get loose.

So a little over an hour before the last Olympic race of my career, I decided to change my pre-race routine. I began with the stationary bike, pedalling hard enough to work up a sweat. While I was sitting there spinning away, Norwegian skater Adne Sondral came by and shook my hand. "Good luck," he said. "I hope you win."

I was stunned. He was about to skate against me.

After 15 intense minutes on the bike, I went out for a jog. It was

freezing outside, but it felt good. When I came back to the stadium, I still didn't feel completely right, but a little better.

I was scheduled to race as part of the fourth pair, with Japanese skater Junichi Inoue. By then, the best time, the one to beat, belonged to Soviet Igor Zhelezovsky. It was 1:12.72.

As I approached the line, I touched the ring I wore around my neck, a ritual I had begun that season. It contained an emerald, baby Jane's birthstone.

I don't think I've ever been in a race where so many thoughts were going in and out of my mind. I thought briefly about my sister Jane, and then about my daughter. She had slept through the 500-metre but was awake, I learned later, for the entire 1000. Maybe she knew something none of the rest of us did. I thought of my family and how much they were rooting for me and how nervous they must be.

When I took my mark, just before I heard the word "go," a jolt of energy shot into my legs. Suddenly, all those feelings of physical insecurity fell away.

Maybe my new pre-race strategy had helped, maybe I just willed it, or maybe someone was looking out for me. All I knew was I was ready.

"Go!"

And I went. There was no reason to hold back. I was no longer scared of the last lap because I had the strength and the will. I love the 1000.

I quickly settled into a good rhythm. My time after 200 metres was 16.7 seconds. Perfect. I knew anything under 17 is flying.

Don't overpower the turns, I warned myself. You're still not gripping well. Make up the time in the straightaway.

My body felt powerful, my movement smooth. I just seemed

to be sailing along, in complete control. I love the 1000.

Then, on my second-to-last inner turn, it happened again. I slipped. My left hand shot towards the ice to steady myself. I also came very close to stepping on a lane marker. You step on a block, you're out of the race.

There was an audible gasp from the audience. Up in the stands my father thought to himself, *Oh, no, not again.*

But for some reason I stayed very calm. *Don't panic.* I remembered how a couple of weeks before, Pete had told the press: "Believe it or not, the 1000 is an easier race for Dan. At 500 metres you can't make a mistake. At 1000 metres, you can make a small mistake and still win." I kept going. Even with that slip, my time at the 600-metre mark was 43.28. I was still on a world-record pace. The crowd realized this and let out a roar.

Now for those last 200 metres. I wasn't tired. I had only one thought in mind. Keep that left arm behind your back. I made it safely around the final turn. Then, coming out of the last turn with 50 metres to go, I dropped both arms and just went for it. I was going for pure speed.

The crowd noise was deafening as I crossed the finish line. A medal, I was certain. *I don't know what type, but that's a medal.* I pulled off the hood of my uniform and for a couple of seconds found it difficult to focus on the clock. The crowd saw my time before I did. Finally, I did too. It was 1:12.43.

That time was almost six-tenths of a second better than I had ever skated in the 1000 in my life. Best of all were those two magic letters right next to it. WR. World Record. I knew I had the gold medal.

I saw Pete skating towards me, his arms out. "You did it. You did it," he kept screaming. "You showed them you can win the big one."

Robin shouted, "Thank you, God." She was hyperventilating so badly she had to go to the medical stand for attention. My father stood and raised his arms to the sky in silent celebration. Dr Loehr had been training his binoculars on me the whole race, and when he lowered them, tears were streaming down his face.

When I skated over to Robin, she kept yelling, "It's over D.J., it's over. Now you've got both of them." She meant world records in both the 500 and 1000. I said nothing. I was too busy crying. I knew well what losing in the Olympics felt like. But winning? I never knew it would feel this good.

Before I realized it, it was time for the medals ceremony. During the national anthem I kept glancing at my medal to make sure it was still there.

Halfway through the anthem, I started thinking about my sister Jane. I hoped that she was

watching. On the last two notes of the anthem, I looked up at the sky and saluted. *That was for you, Jane. I did win one for you.* It just took a little bit longer than I thought it would.

After the ceremony, an official came up to me and said, "You know, there's a victory lap with the Olympic mascots." Having never taken one before, I didn't realize it. Months before the Olympics, Robin and I had discussed my taking an unofficial victory lap with Janie. We were just dreaming.

But then the lights in the arena went off, and they started playing "The Skater's Waltz." People were singing softly and flashbulbs were popping. It was quiet, almost like church, and you could hear my blades scraping on the ice.

I looked up, and suddenly a security guard handed Janie to me. Robin had somehow managed to pass her down ten rows of spectators. Why Janie wasn't terrified by this scene, I don't know. She was smiling and looking around as if this were the most normal activity in the world.

For the first few steps of that victory lap, I concentrated on staying up more than ever before. I had my daughter in one arm, flowers in the other, two kids in costume beside me and timing devices out on the ice. *Whatever you do, don't fall.*

When I started to relax, I glanced at Janie, and she looked

NEXT MONTH

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Book Section:
Nowhere to Hide
An Englishwoman who had made Iraq her home finds herself and her family caught up in the killing fields of Kurdistan

IN READER'S DIGEST FOR SEPTEMBER

like an angel. She still had a little smile on her face, and her eyes were wide with excitement. There was an American flag on her cheek that Robin had pasted there that morning.

I often wonder if that moment will register as Janie's first memory. It would be nice if some part of her could recall the beautiful darkness, the sound of the ice skates and everybody singing.

I know it will never leave me. The circumstances that brought me to that moment had essentially begun with Jane's death in 1988. And here I was six years later, a baby called Jane in my arms, tasting victory at last.

I had indeed come full circle.

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Doctor's Dilemma

MY BROTHER-IN-LAW Alex works in the metal shop at the local art school. Each day an elderly student complimented him on doing such meticulous work with his hands. She told him how she wished her son would change jobs and do the kind of work *he* loved, fixing up old cars. Apparently he spent all his spare time on his hobby, and she thought he was meant to be a mechanic. Alex asked her what her son did for a living. "He's a surgeon," she replied.

— Margaret Graham, Canada

Kid Questions

AFTER church one Sunday, I noticed my five-year-old son Dennis writing intently. "Dad," he said, "how do you spell 'God'?" Pleased that he must have been paying attention in church, I told him. And then he asked,

"How do you spell 'Zilla'?"

—William Schueneman

OUR SIX-YEAR-OLD son begged us for a pet, but because I'm allergic to animal dander, we told him he could have a goldfish. We read in the paper that the pet shop was having a sale on goldfish kits, which included the fish, fishbowl, food and coloured stones for the bowl's bottom. When I said that we would be buying him a goldfish kit, he looked surprised. "You mean," he said, "I have to put together my own fish?"

— Jan Hawkins

MY EIGHT-YEAR-OLD daughter and I were listening to the radio when an ad for a weight-loss programme came on. The woman in the ad proudly announced that she had lost 15 centimetres using the programme. My daughter looked at me, puzzled. "Why would anyone want to be shorter?"

— Mary Hoogerhyde